

1. A Consumer's Guide To The Nation's Drinking Water

The United States enjoys one of the best supplies of drinking water in the world. Nevertheless, many of us who once gave little or no thought to the water that comes from our taps are now asking the question: "Is my water safe to drink?" While tap water that meets federal and state standards is generally safe to drink, threats to drinking water are increasing. Short-term disease outbreaks and water restrictions during droughts have demonstrated that we can no longer take our drinking water for granted.



Consumers have many questions about their drinking water. How safe is my drinking water? What is being done to improve security of public water systems? Where does my drinking water come from, and how is it treated? Do private **wells** receive the same protection as public water systems? What can I do to help protect my drinking water?

This booklet provides the answers to these and other frequently asked questions.

This booklet also directs you to more detailed sources of information. Often, you will be directed to a page on the EPA website. Additionally, the Safe Drinking Water Hotline is available to answer your questions. Please also see Appendix C for more resources. Refer to the Glossary (Appendix D) for definitions of words in bold font.

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What you need to know to protect your family

Sensitive Subpopulations

Some people may be more vulnerable to **contaminants** in drinking water than the general population. People undergoing chemotherapy or living with HIV/AIDS, transplant patients, children and infants, the frail elderly, and pregnant women and their fetuses can be particularly at risk for infections.

If you have special health care needs, consider taking additional precautions with your drinking water, and seek advice from your health care provider. For more information, see www.epa.gov/safewater/healthcare/special.html.

You will find information on bottled water and home water treatment units on page 16 of this booklet. You may also contact NSF International, Underwriter's Laboratory, or the Water Quality Association. Contact information is located in Appendix C.